

FUTURE POLITICAL
STATUS OF THE PEOPLE
OF THE PHILIPPINES

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FUTURE POLITICAL STATUS OF THE PEOPLE OF THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS.

FEBRUARY 2, 1915.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. HITCHCOCK, from the Committee on the Philippines, submitted
the following

REPORT.

[To accompany H. R. 18459.]

The Philippine Committee herewith reports H. R. 18459, popularly known as the Philippine bill, with a recommendation that it be passed with certain amendments to its legislative features and with a substitute preamble.

The committee began hearings on this bill on the 14th of December and closed them on the 11th of January. These have been printed and furnished to each Senator. When the sessions began there were widely divergent views as to the merits of the measure entertained by members of the committee. At the close of the hearings there was substantial unanimity of opinion among members of the committee without regard to party as to most of the legislative features of the bill and proposed amendments.

Upon the preamble there was more divergence, but even with the unusual problem presented by that feature of the bill the chairman was authorized to make a favorable report by the votes of 10 members of the committee, 3 dissenting and 1 being absent.

For the most part the bill as it passed the House of Representatives and in its present form is a reenactment of existing law, which fact accounts for its length. The important changes may be summarized as follows:

CHANGES FROM PRESENT LAW.

The present Philippine Legislature consists of two houses, of which the lower house is elected by the people and is called the assembly, while the upper house is known as the commission, and is appointed by the President of the United States. It is proposed in this bill to change the name of the commission to the senate, to increase its membership to 24, and to allow the voters of the Philippine Islands to elect 22 of its members, the length of the term to

be four years, the other two senators to be appointed by the Governor General to represent the districts inhabited by the non-Christian tribes.

The lower house is increased in number from 81 to 90, and 81 of the representatives shall, as heretofore, be elected by the people, while 9 of the representatives shall hereafter be appointed by the Governor General to represent the districts inhabited by the Moros and other non-Christian tribes.

Heretofore the Governor General has been a member of the upper house, without any veto power, which has existed, however, in the Secretary of War. Hereafter the Governor General under this bill will have the right to exercise the veto power and will not be a member of the upper body. His veto may be overridden by the votes of two-thirds of the senate and assembly, but in such cases the President of the United States has the right to interpose an absolute veto within six months. Certain legislation can not, however, become effective until signed by the President of the United States. Included in the legislation requiring the approval of the President of the United States may be mentioned acts providing for the disposition of concessions in respect to public land, timber, and mining rights; acts relating to immigration into the islands; acts relating to currency or coinage; acts authorizing the issue of bonds for indebtedness; acts redistricting the Philippine Islands for legislative elections; and acts relating to the tariff on imports.

Originally the Philippine Legislature was permitted to impose export duties. Within recent years, however, that power was taken away. The present bill imposes no restriction on the legislature in levying export duties except that they can not be levied upon exports to the United States, nor upon imports from the United States.

Heretofore the limit of indebtedness of the Philippine Government was placed at \$10,000,000, exclusive of the \$7,000,000 of friar-land bonds. As the latter are in course of retirement by means of a sinking fund, the present bill places the limit of indebtedness at \$17,000,000, so that as the friar-land bonds are retired other bonds in payment for public works may be issued to take their place, not, however, to exceed a total indebtedness of \$17,000,000. In this limit, however, is not included such bonds as the Philippine Government shall issue, to enable it to buy and hold as treasury assets the bonds of Provinces and municipalities which otherwise would have no good market. These in turn, however, are limited for each municipality and Province.

Heretofore the right of suffrage has been exercised by only about 250,000 voters. The present bill will materially increase this number by extending the right of suffrage to any citizen able to read as well as write a native language. This addition, however, will not apply in the first election to be held under this bill. Thereafter it will increase the electorate to a total of probably 700,000.

Hereafter appointments made by the Governor General are made subject to the confirmation of the Philippine Senate by the terms of this bill.

IMPORTANT AMENDMENTS PROPOSED.

The committee proposes a substitute for the preamble as adopted by the House of Representatives. This substitute is deemed to be free from certain ambiguities in the House preamble and avoids the reference to debatable historical events included in the House preamble. It states in plain language the reasons for the present bill and also declares the purpose of the United States with regard to ultimate independence under proper conditions. Some members of the committee who originally opposed any preamble have been induced to support this substitute because they have felt that to cut the preamble from the bill now would be construed in the Philippine Islands as a declaration that independence was never to be given, which would result in widespread disappointment and discontent. The committee therefore considered that the preamble herewith recommended, indicating the purpose to grant independence to the people of the Philippine Islands when in the judgment of the United States the Philippine people have become fitted for its enjoyment, will serve to encourage them in the enormous progress they are now making and in the experiment of self-government which they are now to try. It is believed that its adoption will for the present settle and remove from political agitation in the islands the question of independence and that the attention of the people will be turned toward the important local problems of education, public works, industrial progress, agricultural development, and sanitation.

The committee recommends dividing the Philippine Islands into districts, as proposed in section 17, for the first election instead of leaving the matter in doubt until the commission acts, as proposed in the House bill. We also propose that any subsequent change of districts shall be subject to the approval of the President.

The committee proposes to make the terms of members of the Philippine Assembly two years instead of three, senators four years in place of six, and Resident Commissioners to the United States four years in place of six. We also propose that the Governor General shall have power to remove a Commissioner when the same is requested by a resolution adopted by a two-thirds vote of the Philippine Legislature.

As a precautionary measure the committee reports an amendment providing for the appointment of a Vice Governor General by the President, in order that the great powers and responsibilities of the office may in case of the absence or disability of the executive be in the hands of one appointed by the President and confirmed by the United States Senate. For a similar reason it is proposed that the highly important executive department of public instruction, embracing the bureau of education, the bureau of health, the bureau of science, and the bureau of non-Christian tribes shall be placed under the control of the Vice Governor General thus appointed and confirmed.

In the past the law has provided that an auditor appointed by the Secretary of War shall have full and independent control of the important work of auditing, checking up, and settling the accounts of public revenues and expenditures in the Philippine government, the provincial governments, and the municipal governments. This

has proven a very wholesome safeguard, and for that reason the committee has proposed by section 26 to incorporate a similar provision in the pending measure, except that the appointment shall be by the President.

In order that no backward step may be taken in the administration of the laws now protecting the civil service in the Philippine Islands, the committee proposes in section 28 that the administration of them shall rest in a director of civil service, chosen by the President, and that no change in these laws shall be made without the approval of the President.

It is the opinion of the committee that there is an urgent need for action on the pending bill at this session, for two reasons:

First. Longer delay will inflame and provoke political agitation, possibly leading to disturbances, and certainly breeding discontent.

Second. Longer delay will continue and increase the present business depression in the islands, due in part to the fact that the uncertainty prevents capital from entering upon new enterprises and even from developing those already entered upon.

For these reasons the committee deems it highly important for the welfare of all interests in the islands that action be had on this bill at this session. This consideration has so impressed members of the committee that they have considered the bill in a nonpartisan spirit and thus been able to reach an almost unanimous decision on most of its features.

